



# Timeline of Old Wye Mill History

1631

Captain William Claiborne establishes the first English settlement in Maryland, on what is now known as Kent Island. Native Americans of the Matapeake tribe of the Algonquin people and the Accohannock tribe, part of the Powhatan Nation, among others, had lived on Maryland's Eastern Shore for thousands of years.

1634

Leonard Calvert, a younger brother of Cecil Calvert, Lord Baltimore, lands on St. Clements Island to establish the Province of Maryland.

1665

Thomas Williams receives a land grant patent for 600 acres on the Wye River called Wilton and soon after, another called Wilton Addition, with both totaling 1,350 acres.

1668

First of the grist mills built on or near the site of the present Wye Mill.

1671

Thomas Williams leaves Maryland, reportedly to avoid payments of debts - and settles in Northumberland Co., VA. Upon his death, his heirs, Thomas II and Elizabeth Williams, become absentee landlords of the Wye Mill.

1682

Edward Barrowcliff built or rebuilt the mill on the present site of the Wye Mill and operated it from about 1683 to 1693.

1693

The Wye Mill is sold to Richard Sweatnam - who operated the mill until his death in 1697.

1697

The Wye Mill passes to William Sweatnam, son of Richard, who operates the mill until 1703, when he is evicted from the property by Richard Bennett III.

1703

Richard Bennett III leases the two land patents from the heirs of Thomas Williams and clear title to the land on which the Wye Mill is located.

1705

Bennett offers Sweatnam a 65 year indenture to operate the mill but Sweatnam apparently refuses.

1706

Richard Bennett III purchases the property for 350 pounds of tobacco at the expiration of his lease Queen Anne's County is formed out of Talbot and Kent Counties with the Wye Mill serving as a survey marker on the dividing line between Queen Anne and Talbot Counties.

1740

The Miller's House is built south of the mill. Still standing today. National Register of Historic Places

1749

Richard Bennett dies without heirs and the mill and property pass to Edward Lloyd III, a close friend and executor of the estate.

1754

Old Wye Mill's existing building is constructed using a traditional post and beam method. While the cladding has been replaced, the main structural elements remain intact.

1759

An ad appears in the Maryland Gazette offering the mill for lease.

1770

Edward Lloyd III dies and the Wye Mill passes to his son, Edward Lloyd, IV.

1778

William Hemsley, the Lloyd's estate manager acquires the mill. At this time Joshua Kennard is the miller.

1779-  
83

The Continental Congress contracts with Hemsley to supply wheat and flour to the American Revolutionary Army under General Washington through 1783. Grist mills from three Eastern Shore counties, including the Wye Grist Mill, supply most of the flour to feed the Army. General Washington blocks the British from capturing Eastern Shore mills, which plays a pivotal role in the outcome of the American Revolutionary war.

1793

Alexander Hemsley, son of William, acquires the mill from his father.

1780's  
-90's

Oliver Evans, a prolific inventor and self-taught engineer, develops a streamlined process to move grain and flour from one milling operation to another, minimizing manual labor.

about  
1800

Wye Mill installs the continuous milling process invented by Oliver Evans, greatly improving efficiency and significantly reducing production costs. (This process is still in use today.)

1812

William Hemsley dies and the mill is acquired by his son, Alexander.

1821

Samuel Hopkins, from a Quaker family of millers and storekeepers, purchases the mill and becomes the first miller to own the mill in over 100 years.

1845

John R. Hopkins purchases the mill and a nearby store from family members. He installed the first of the Fitz steel water wheels.

1850

The census of this year for Eastern Shore counties indicated that the grain crops being grown in the area included wheat, rye, Indian corn, oats, barley and buckwheat.

1877

John F. T. Brown purchases the mill and operates it until 1899. In 1899, he installed a novel, "one or two break mill" to generate white flour. This groundbreaking installation was written up in the American Miller magazine.

1899

The mill is purchased by John S. Sewell, descended from a long line of English millers. He replaced the water wheel with two turbines.

1918

The mill was purchased by Winthrop Blakeslee who discontinued the use of turbines due to the insufficient head of water. He reinstalled the old Fitz steel waterwheel and installed an early, successful Anglo-American roller mill.

1941

The schooner Carrie Anne carries the last shipment of flour from Wye Mill delivered by water transport.

1953

The last year of the Wye Mill's commercial operation. Mr. Blakeslee sells the mill and the mill pond to the State of Maryland; with the pond to be turned into a public fishing pond.

# 1955

Mill dam destroyed and mill severely damaged by hurricanes Connie and Diane (August 12 & 18)

# 1956

Rebuilding of the mill begins; sawmill and blacksmith shop removed; dam rebuilt to U.S. Army Corps of Engineers standards. Ownership of the mill is transferred to the Society for the Preservation of Maryland Antiquities (now Preservation Maryland).

# 1959

Mill running again. Throughout the 70's, the Mill was operated by Chesapeake College students through a federal work program.

# 1980

Friends of Wye Mill formed as a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation to assist with Mill preservation.

# 1984

Barton McGuire, an internationally known professional miller, is hired to operate the mill and oversee major renovations accompanied by professional millwright James Kricker and Charles Howell, a retired miller from the Phillipsburg Manor mill in New York.

# 1996

Preservation Maryland transferred the ownership of the Wye Grist Mill to the Friends of Wye Mill, Inc., which is dedicated to ensuring that the Wye Grist Mill is preserved, operated, visited and appreciated as an extraordinary example of American National Treasures.

